

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 79

LEADERS MAGAZINE
July-September 1983

The Threat

By The Honorable William J. Casey,
Director of Central Intelligence, United States

The United States faces serious threats to its security and national interests throughout the world. These threats include social, economic and political instability as well as outright military aggression. The most serious of these threats, however, are those that stem from activities of the Soviet Union.

I see five major types of threat posed by the Soviet Union. The first three arise primarily from the USSR's growing military capabilities: their strategic forces, their general purpose forces and their growing ability to project power over long distances. In addition, the Soviets have improved their ability to destabilize and gain influence over small countries—a threat which I call creeping imperialism—and they have increased their political and propaganda efforts to divide the Alliance and diminish the position of the United States.

The first of these threats comes from inter-continental ballistic missiles and other carriers of nuclear warheads. The Soviets have been spending three times as much on these strategic forces as we do.

The second threat is that of the Warsaw Pact forces on the European front. The Soviets are deploying in forward areas large numbers of a new tank with improved armor protection, fast, self-propelled artillery and the all-weather Fencer aircraft, which can strike deeply and quickly into NATO's rear areas with a payload larger than the aircraft it replaced.

The third category of threat that concerns us is that of power projection. Since 1975, we have seen the Soviets develop a capability to bring support over long distances to pro-Soviet elements in coordination with their close allies. Soviet transport planes and cargo ships were used to carry sophisticated Soviet weapons thousands of miles to meet up with Cuban troops in Angola and Ethiopia.

The fourth category is creeping imperialism. The Soviets have skillfully constructed an array of associates to use a mix of tactics—political, diplomatic, subversion, terrorism and insurgency—to expand Soviet and pro-Soviet influence and to destabilize and overthrow governments. The Soviets have compiled a remarkable record in this activity.

This creeping imperialism threatens our interests most immediately in Central America and the Caribbean. Cuban support of insurgency

and subversion in Central America could divide our own hemisphere and threaten the rich oil fields of our Mexican neighbors as well as control of the canal passage in Panama. Political turmoil in Central America and a flood of refugees from the south could divert the United States from threats elsewhere in the world.

The fifth threat is in the Soviet political and propaganda initiatives designed to confuse and divide us from our friends. The most dangerous political thrust is the current effort to exploit European fear of nuclear weapons and the political risk which European governments perceive in the deployment of Pershings and cruise missiles in NATO countries. Andropov comes to power finding in his lap an unprecedented opportunity to advance the Soviet objective of dividing the U.S. and Europe and, at the same time, a basketful of economic and financial problems.

We should remember there are forces likely to constrain, limit and work against the accomplishment of Soviet goals. First off, Andropov is faced with declining economic growth. Soviet agriculture has suffered four successive crop failures and there is a growing sense of malaise over the quality of life. Soviet society suffers from declining health; it is the only industrialized nation where the life expectancy for men is actually declining. Corruption and alcohol addiction are rampant. The Soviet government does not seem to know how to deal with these problems, beyond trying to improve discipline through strong-arm tactics.

CONTINUED

And as he and his colleagues look abroad, the correlation of forces is not all going the Soviet way. Soviet forces are bogged down in Afghanistan. Poland is a running sore. Rumania is getting itself into serious economic and political trouble. Cuba, Vietnam and other clients abroad constitute an economic drain. The USSR's various proxies are not wholly puppets, but cooperate with the USSR where this benefits their interests.

There is no guarantee that the USSR now has all its friends nailed down for all time and we know that certain of them are careful to keep ties open to the West. Most Third World leaders are fully aware of Soviet intentions and think—perhaps mistakenly—that they can get what the USSR and its friends can give them

without becoming too closely embraced by the Russian bear.

Meanwhile the Soviets continue to hurt their own cause by their violation of Afghanistan and their often ham-handed behavior elsewhere. ●



William J. Casey